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VER-VERT:

OR, THE

NUNNERY PARROT.

Quid tamen iſta fides? quid rari forma coloris?
Quid vox mutandis ingenioſa ſonis?
Quid juvat, ut datus es, *ſacris* placuiſſe puellis?
Infelix avium gloria nempe jaces! ——
Oſſa tegit tumulus, tumulus pro corpore magnus,
Quo lapis exiguus par ſibi carmen habet.

OVID. ELEG.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence.]

BRITISH MUSEUM
17
31
MAR

VER-VERT:

OR, THE

NUNNERY PARROT.

AN

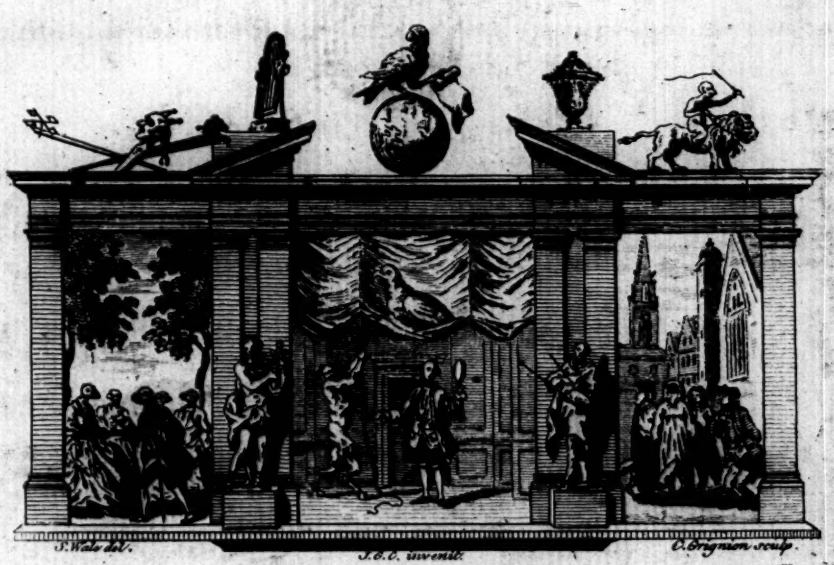
HEROIC POEM

IN FOUR CANTOS.

INSCRIBED TO

THE ABBESS OF D*****.

Translated from the French of Monsieur GRESSET.



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THE VERSES OF DARES

IN LORD CHARLES

HEROIC POEM

OF

ÆNEAS:

VER-VERT:

OR, THE

NUNNERY PARROT.

INSCRIBED TO

THE ABBESS OF D*****.

CANTO I.

O You, round whom, at VIRTUE's ſhrine,
The *ſolitary* GRACES ſhine,
With native charms all hearts engage,
And reign without religious rage;
You, whoſe congenial Soul by Heaven
A pleaſing guide to TRUTH was given,
Uniting, with the family
Of rigid DUTIES, harmleſs MIRTH,

Daughter of ſocial LIBERTY,
Twin-born with HUMOR at a birth,
And ev'ry other Pow'r to pleaſe,
TASTE, FANCY, ELEGANCE and EASE;
O! ſince you bid your bard relate
A noble bird's diſaſtrous fate,
In notes of ſympathetic woe,
Be You my MUSE, my ſoul inſpire,
And teach my numbers how to flow
Like thoſe which trembled from your lyre
In ſoft and ſorrow-ſoothing ſound,
Whilſt liſt'ning CUPIDS wept around,
When dear * SULTANA's ſpirit fled,
In youthful vigor's vernal bloom,
To the dark manſions of the dead:
Then for my Hero's hapleſs doom
Such tears might once again be ſhed.
One might, upon his virtues croſs'd
By adverſe Fortune's envious rage,
And wand'rings over many a coaſt,
Swell out the ſoporific page,
And other ODYSSEYS compoſe
To lull the reader to repoſe:

One

* A Lap-Dog.

One might the Gods and Devils raiſe
Of ſuperannuated lies,
Spin out the deeds of forty days
To volumes of dull hiſtories,
And with a pompous tediouſneſs
Sublimely heavy moralize
Upon a Bird, in *epic* dreſs,
Who as ÆNEAS' ſelf was great,
As famous too for godlineſs
And each way more unfortunate;
But *folio's* are, in verſe, exceſs,
Which the ſweet Muſes moſt abhor,
For they are ſportive Bees of Spring
Who dwell not long on any bow'r,
But lightly wand'ring on the wing
Collect the bloom from flow'r to flow'r,
And when one fragrant bloſſom's dry
To other ſweets unrifled fly.
This truth my obſervation drew
From faultleſs Nature and from you;
And may theſe lines, I copy, prove
I'm govern'd by the laws I love!
Should I too faithfully portraying

Some cloyſter'd characters, reveal
The convent arts themſelves arraying
In pomp, with hieroglyphic ſkill,
Each weighty bus'neſs of the grate,
Each ſerious nothing's myſtic face,
Each trifle ſwell'd with holy ſtate;
Your native humor, whilſt I trace
The comic ſemblance, will forbear
To blame the ſtrokes you cannot fear;
You may deſpiſe, from folly free,
What dullneſs is oblig'd to wear,
The formal maſk of gravity.
Illuſion's meteors never ſhine
To lead aſtray ſuch ſouls as thine.
All *holy arts* Heav'n values leſs
Than amiable chearfulneſs.
Should VIRTUE her own image ſhew
To raviſh'd mortals here-below,
With features fierce ſhe'd not appear
Nor Superſtition's holy leer,
But, like the GRACES, or like YOU,
She'd come to claim her altar's due.
In many an author of renown

I've

I've red this curious obſervation,
That, by much wand'ring up and down,
Men catch the faults of ev'ry nation
And loſe the virtues of their own.
'Tis better, e'en where ſcanty fare is,
Our homely hearths and honors watching,
Under protection of our LARES,
A calm domeſtic life to wed,
Than run about infection catching
Where ever Chance and Error tread:
The youth too ſoon who goes abroad
Will half a foreigner become,
And bring his wond'ring friends a load
Of ſtrange exotic vices home.

This truth the Hero of my tale
Exemplifies in tarniſh'd glory;
Should ſceptic wits the truth aſſail,
I call for witneſs to my ſtory
Each cloyſter'd Echo now that dwells
In NEVERS' conſecrated cells.

At NEVERS, but few years ago,
Among the Nuns o' th' VISITATION,
There dwelt a Parrot, tho' a Beau,

For ſenſe of wond'rous reputation;
Whoſe virtues, and genteel addreſs,
Whoſe figure, and whoſe noble ſoul,
Would have ſecur'd him from diſtreſs
Could wit and beauty fate controul.
VER-VERT (for ſo the Nuns agreed
To call this noble perſonage)
The hopes of an illuſtrious breed,
To INDIA ow'd his parentage;
By an old miſſionary ſent
To this ſaid convent for his good,
He yet was young and innocent,
And nothing *worldly* underſtood.
Beauteous he was, and debonnair,
Light, ſpruce, inconſtant, gay, and free,
And unreſerv'd, as youngſters are,
Ere age brings on hypocriſy.
In ſhort a bird, from prattling merit,
Worthy a convent to inherit.
The tender cares I need not tell
Of all the ſiſterhood devout,
Nothing, 'tis ſaid, each lov'd ſo well,
Leave but her ghoſtly father out,

Nay

Nay in ſome hearts, not void of grace,
One plain hiſtorian makes no doubt
The parrot of the prieſt took place.
He ſhar'd in this ſerene abode
Whate'er was lov'd by the profeſſion;
On him ſuch dainties were beſtow'd
As Nuns prepare againſt confeſſion,
And for the *ſacred* entrails hoard
Of *holy fathers in the Lord.*
Sole licens'd male to be belov'd
VER-VERT was bleſs'd without controul,
Careſſing and careſs'd he rov'd
Of all the monaſt'ry the ſoul,
Except ſome antiquated dames,
Whoſe hearts to pleaſure callous grown,
Remark'd with jealous eyes the flames
Of boſoms younger than their own.
At years of reaſon not arriv'd
A life of privilege he liv'd,
He ſaid and did whate'er he wou'd,
And what he ſaid or did was good.
He'd peck the Nuns in wanton play
To while their plain-work hours away;

No party ever was approv'd
Without his fav'rite company,
In him they found what females lov'd
That life of bliſs variety:
He'd ſtrut a Beau in ſportive rings
Utt'ring pert ſentences by rote,
Mimick the Butterfly's light wings
Or Nightingale's complaining note;
He'd laugh, ſing, whiſtle, joke, and leer,
And frolick, but diſcreetly ſo,
With a prudential cautious fear,
As Nuns probationary do.
Queſtion'd at once by many a tongue
Inceſſantly inquiſitive,
He could, diſcordant ſounds among,
To each a proper anſwer give;
This pow'r from Cæsar's nothing varies,
Who did at once great plans conceive
And dictate to four Secretaries.
If chronicles may be believ'd,
So lov'd the pamper'd Gallant liv'd,
That with the Nuns he always din'd
On rarities of ev'ry kind;

Then

Then hoards, occaſionally varied,
Of biſcuits, ſweet-meats, nuts, and fruit,
Each ſiſter in her pocket carried,
Subordinately to recruit,
At leiſure times, when not at table,
His ſtomach indefatigable.
The little CARES with tender faces
And fond ATTENTIONS as they ſay,
Are natives of theſe holy places,
As VER-VERT witneſs'd ev'ry day.
No human Parrot of the court
Was fondled half ſo much as he,
In indolence genteel, and ſport,
His hours roll'd on delightfully:
Each chamber that he fancied beſt
Was his the dormitory round,
And, where at eve he choſe to reſt,
Honor'd thrice honor'd was the ground,
And much the lucky Nun was bleſs'd!
But nights he very ſeldom paſs'd
With thoſe whom years and prudence bleſs'd,
The plain neat room was more his taſte
Of ſome young damſel not profeſs'd;

This nicety at board and bed
Shew'd he was nobly born and bred.
When the young female anchorite,
Whom all the reſt with envy view'd,
Had fix'd him for the coming night,
Perch'd on her AGNUS box he ſtood,
Silent in undiſturb'd repoſe
Till VENUS' warning ſtar aroſe:
And when at morn the pious maid
Her toilette's myſteries diſplay'd
He freely ſaw whate'er was done;
I ſay the toilette, for I've red,
But ſpeak it in a lower tone,
That virgins, in a cloyſter bred,
Their looks and languiſhings review
In mirrors to their eyes as true
As thoſe, that ſerve to ſhew the faces
Of dames who flaunt in gems and laces.
For, as in city or at court
Some certain taſte or mode prevails,
There is among the godly ſort
A taſte in putting on their vails;
There is an art to fold with grace,

Round

Round a young veſtal's blooming face,
Plain crape, or other ſimple ſtuff,
With happy negligence enough.
Often the ſportive LOVES in ſwarms,
Which to the monaſt'ries repair,
Spread o'er the holy fillets charms
And tie 'em with a *killing* air;
In ſhort the Nuns are never ſeen
In parlour or at grate below,
Ere at the looking-glaſs they've been,
To ſteal a decent glance or ſo.
This ſoftly whiſper'd friends between,
Farther digreſſion we adjourn,
And to our Hero now return.
Safe in this unmoleſted ſcene
VER-VERT, amidſt a life of bliſs
Unrival'd reign'd on ev'ry part;
Her ſlighted Sparrows took amiſs
This change in ſiſter THECLA's heart;
Four Finches thro' mere rage expir'd
At his advancement mortified,
And two Grimalkins late admir'd,
With envy languiſh'd, droop'd and died.

In days like theſe of joy and love,
Who would have thought ſuch tender cares
To form his youthful mind, ſhould prove,
Thro' Fortune's ſpite, deſtructive ſnares,
Or that an adverſe time ſhould come
When this ſame idol of their hearts
Should ſtand the mark, by cruel doom,
Of Horror's moſt envenom'd darts?
But ſtop, my Muſe, forbid to flow
The tears ariſing from the ſight
Of ſuch an unexpected woe,
Too bitter fruit alas! to grow
From the ſoft root of dear delight!

The End of the firſt CANTO.

CANTO II.

IN ſuch a ſchool a bird of ſenſe
Would ſoon acquire, it is confeſs'd,
The gift of copious eloquence;
For, ſave his meals and hours of reſt,
His tongue was always occupied:
And no *good* treatiſe could excell,
In phraſes ready cut and dried,
His doctrines about living well.
He was not like thoſe parrots rude
Whom dangling in a public cage
The common manners of the age
Have render'd converſably lewd;
Who, doctor'd by the worldly tribe,
With frail concupiſcence indued,
Each human vanity deſcribe.
Our VER-VERT was a ſaint in grain
A ſoul with innocency fraught,
Who never utter'd word prophane,

Who never had immodeſt thought.
But in the room of ribbald wit
Each myſtic colloquy he knew,
And many a text in holy writ
With pray'rs and collects not a few;
Could pſalms and canticles repeat
And *Benedicite* compleat;
He could petition Heav'n for grace
With ſanctimonious voice and eyes,
And at a proper time and place
Religiouſly ſoliloquize.
Each help he had in this learn'd college
That could conduce to ſacred knowlege.
For many virgins had retreated
Thro' grace to this religious fold,
Who, word for word, by rote repeated
Each Chriſtmas carol, new and old.
From frequent loſſons ev'ry day
The ſcholar grew as learn'd as they;
Their very tone of ſpeaking too
In pious drawlings he expreſs'd,
The ſame religious ſighs he drew
Deep heaving from the godly breaſt,

And

And languid notes in which theſe doves
Mournfully chaunt their myſtic loves.
In ſhort the Bird perform'd his part
In all the pſalmodizing art.
Such merit could not be confin'd
Within a cloyſter's narrow bound,
But flew, for Fame is ſwift as wind,
The neighb'ring territories round;
Thro' NEVERS' town from morn to night,
Scarce any other talk was heard,
But of diſcourſes exquiſite
Betwixt the Nuns and INDIAN Bird:
And e'en from MOULINS numbers came
To witneſs to the truth of Fame.
VER-VERT, the parlour's boaſted glory,
Whilſt all that came were told his ſtory,
Perch'd proud upon his fav'rite ſtand
Siſter MELANIA's iv'ry hand,
Who pointed out each excellence
Of mind or body he poſſeſs'd,
His ſweet mild temper, poliſh'd ſenſe,
And various colors on his breaſt,
When his engaging aſpect won

Each

Each viſiter he look'd upon;
But beauty the moſt exquiſite
Was, in our tender proſelyte,
The leaſt his qualities among.
For all forgot his feath'ry pride
And ev'ry outward charm beſide
The moment that they heard his tongue.
With various righteous graces fill'd,
By the good ſiſterhood inſtill'd,
Th' illuſtrious Bird his ſpeech began,
At ev'ry turn alluſions new,
Conceptions fine, and doctrines true,
In ſtreams of honey'd language ran.
But what was ſingularly new,
In this uncommon gift of ſpeech,
And ſcarce will be reputed true,
Not any whilſt they heard him preach,
Did ever feel (his pow'rs were ſuch)
Eccleſiaſtic lethargy,
From ſoporific ſanctity;
What Orator can boaſt as much?
Much was he prais'd and much careſs'd,
Whilſt He familiariz'd to fame,

Convinc'd

Convinc'd 'twas only a mere name,
His head on his projected breaſt
With *prieſtly gentleneſs* reclin'd,
And always modeſtly expreſs'd
The inward triumph of his mind.
When he had utter'd to the crowd
His treaſur'd ſcientific ſtore,
He mutter'd ſomething not aloud
And ſunk in cadence more and more,
Till, with an aſpect ſanctified,
At laſt in ſilence down he ſate,
And left his audience edified
On what had paſs'd to ruminate.
Theſe eloquent harangues would flow
With choice of ſweeteſt phraſes fraught
Except a trifling word or ſo,
Which accidentally he caught,
Of ſcandal, at the grate below,
Or ſome ſmall ſyllable of haſte,
Which gentle Nuns will, by the bye,
At one another ſometimes caſt,
When none but holy ears are nigh.
Thus liv'd in this delightful cage,

As saint, as master, or as sage,
Good father VER-VERT, dear to more
Than of vail'd HERES half a score,
As any cloyster'd Monk as sae,
As rev'rend too in holy state,
Learn'd as an ABBE town approv'd,
And fair as youths by brides caress'd,
For lovely he was always lov'd,
Perfum'd, well bred, in fashion dress'd,
In short, had he not hapless rov'd
To see the world, compleatly blest.
But soon the fatal moment came
Of ever mournful memory,
Destructive to our Hero's fame.
Voyage of crimes and misery,
Of sad remorse and endless shame!
Would foresight in a former age
Had torn it from th' historic page!
Ah! what a dang'rous good at best
Is the possession of renown!
Obscurity is sooner blest
From his sad fate it will be shewn;
Too much success and brilliant parts

Have

Have often ruin'd virtuous hearts.
Thy talents, VER-VERT, and thy name
To these lone walls were not confin'd,
As far as NANTS the voice of fame
Proclaim'd th' endowments of thy mind.
At NANTS, 'tis known, the VISITATION
Of rev'rend sisters has a fold,
Who there, as elsewhere thro' the nation,
Know first whate'er by Fame is told.
With other news, each holy Dame,
This Parrot's merit having heard,
Had longings to behold the bird.
A lay maid's wish is like a flame,
But when a Nun has such desire
'Tis fifty times a fiercer fire.
Their curious hearts already burn'd,
Their thoughts to distant NEVERS flew,
And many a holy head was turn'd
The feather'd prodigy to view.
Immediately upon the spot
To the good Abbess of the place
A female secretary wrote,
Beseeching her to have the grace

To NANTS, by water down the LOIRE,
To send the bird so fam'd for sense,
That all the female NANTINE choir
Might hear and see his excellence.
The letter goes, all question, when,
The Bearer will return agen?
'Twill be eleven days at least,
An age to any female breast!
They send each day fresh invitation
Depriv'd of sleep thro' expectation.
Howe'er at length to NEVERS came
This letter of importance great
At once the convent's in a flame
And the whole chapter's summon'd strait.
"Lose VER-VERT, Heav'n! send rather death!
"What comfort will with us be left,
"These solitary tow'rs beneath,
"When of the darling bird bereft?"
Thus spoke the Nuns of blooming years,
Whose hearts, fatigued with holy leisure,
Preferr'd to pennance and to tears
Soft sentiments of harmless pleasure.
In truth, a holy flock, at least,

So

So close confin'd, might fairly claim
To be by one poor bird caress'd,
Since there no other parrot came
Fledg'd or *unfledg'd* to chear their nest.
Yet 'twas th' opinion of the dames
Who, by their age superior fate,
Rulers in senatorial state,
Whose hearts resisted passion's flames,
That, for a fortnight's space or so,
Their dear disciple strait should go;
For, prudence overweighing love,
Th' infatuated state decreed.
A stubborn negative might prove
The cause of mutual hate, and breed
For ever after much bad blood
'Twixt theirs and NANTS's sisterhood.
Soon as *the Ladies*, in conclusion,
O' th' upper house the bill had pass'd,
The *Commons* were in great confusion;
Young SERAPHINA cry'd in haste,
"Ah! what a sacrifice they make!
"And is it true consent they give?
"Fate from us nothing more can take!
"How, VER-VERT leave us, and we live!"

Another, tho' reputed ſage,
Grew pale at what ſhe heard 'em ſay.
No council could her grief aſſwage,
She trembled, wept, and ſwoon'd away.
All mourn'd departing VER-VERT's fate,
Preſaging, from I know not what,
This tour would prove unfortunate.
In horrid dreams the night they ſpent,
The morn redoubled horrors ſent.
Too vain regret! the mournfull hour,
Already's come, within their view,
The boat is waiting at the ſhore,
The Fates command to bid adieu,
And to his abſence, for awhile,
Their throbbing boſoms reconcile,
Already ev'ry ſiſter pin'd
Like the ſoft turtle of the grove,
To grief before hand ſelf reſign'd
For the lone hours of widow'd love.
What tender kiſſes were beſtow'd
On VER-VERT leaving this abode!
What briney ſtreams of ſorrow flow'd!
The nearer his departure drew

They

They dozed on him more and more,
And found each moment genius new
And beauties never seen before;
At length he leaves their wishfull eyes,
Love with him from the convent flies.
" Ah! go, my Child, my dearest haste,
" Where honor calls thee from my arms,
" But O! return, thy exil past,
" For ever true, and full of charms!
" May Zephyrs with their airy plumes
" Waft thee secretly on thy way,
" Whilst I, amidst these dreary tombs
" In anguish waste the tardy day,
" And sadly solitary mourn
" Uncomforted till thy return.
" O Ver-Vert, dearest Soul, adieu,
" And, whilst thy journey happy proves,
" May all, thy beauteous form who view,
" Think thee the eldest of the Loves."
Such were the words and parting scene
Of one young lately vailed Fair,
Who oft, to dissipate chagrin,
In bed made many a fervent pray'r,

Learnt

Learnt from the *manual* of RACINE.
And who with all her heart, no doubt,
Would, for ſweet VER-VERT's company,
Have left the holy monaſt'ry,
And follow'd him the world throughout.
But now the droll is put on board
At preſent virtuous and ſincere,
And modeſt too in deed and word:
O! may his boſom ev'ry where,
By prudence guarded, ſtill retain
That worth, and bring it home again!
Be that however as it may
The boat's already on its way,
The noiſe of waves beneath the prow
Reechoes in the air above,
The ZEPHYRS favorably blow,
And NEVERS backwards ſeems to move.

The End of the ſecond CANTO.

CANTO III.

IN the ſame paſſage boat, that bore
This bird of holineſs from ſhore,
There happen'd the ſame time to ſail
Two Nymphs of conſtitution frail,
A Nurſe loquacious, two Gaſcoons,
A vagrant Monk, and three Dragoons,
Which, for a youth of piety,
Was worſhipful ſociety!
VER-VERT, unpractis'd in their ways,
As folks in foreign countries do,
Stood ſilently in fix'd amaze;
Their thoughts and language both were new.
The ſtile he did not underſtand,
It was not, like the ſcriptures, phras'd
In dialect of holy land,
With ſacred eaſtern figures rais'd,
Nor that, in which the veſtal band
Of Nuns their Maker pray'd and prais'd,
But full of, what the bird ſurpriz'd,
Big words not over chriſtianiz'd;

For the Dragoons, a wordy race
Not burden'd with religious grace,
Spoke fluently the ſutler's tongue,
Saint BACCHUS only they ador'd,
To whom libations oft they pour'd
For paſtime as they ſail'd along;
The Gaſcoons and the female three
Convers'd in idioms which belong
To VENUS's great myſtery;
On t' other hand the Sailers ſwore,
Curs'd, and blaſphem'd each heav'nly pow'r,
Whoſe voices, not in flow'rs of ſpeech,
But words ſonorous us'd to deal,
Roundly articulated each
Nor loſt the ſmalleſt ſyllable.
In this variety of ſound
And unintelligible prate,
VER-VERT, ſurpriz'd at all around,
Sad, ſilent, and embaraſs'd ſate;
He fear'd his ign'rance to betray
And knew not what to think or ſay.
The Monk, to ſatisfy the crowd
Who long'd to hear his thoughts aloud,

To talk the penſive ſtranger preſs'd;
The Girls in words too debonnair,
Unus'd at pennace, or in pray'r,
The melancholy bird careſs'd:
Here by the ſex he lov'd addreſs'd
The Parrot (whilſt his look benign
With uſual light religious glifters)
In ſacred ſighs and nunn'ry whine
Anſwers, *God ſave you holy Siſters!*
At this *God ſave you*, we'll ſuppoſe,
An univerſal laugh aroſe;
In ridicule the words aloud
Were echo'd thro' the noiſy crowd;
Thus mock'd, abaſh'd the novice ſtood
And inly chew'd the mental cud.
He found what he had ſaid was wrong,
And ſaw 'twas needfull to endeavour
To ſpeak the language of the throng,
If e'er he hop'd to gain their favor:
His heart, by nature fond of praiſe,
Which had been nouriſh'd all his days,
Till then, with flatt'ry's incenſe full,
Now could alas! ſuſtain no more

Of conſtancy the modeſt pow'r
Againſt th' aſſaults of ridicule;
Here firſt, by four Impatience croſs'd
VER-VERT his innocency loſt.
From thence he pour'd ungratefull curſes
Againſt the Nuns his former nurſes,
Who never had adorn'd his mind,
Careleſs of literary merit,
With language copious and refin'd,
Replete with elegance and ſpirit.
T' acquire this great accompliſhment
Each earneſt faculty he bent,
And tho' his prudent tongue lay ſtill
His ſoul of thinking had its fill.
But firſt the bird reſolv'd, in pet,
All the old gew-gaws to forget
Which hitherto compos'd his creed,
That new ideas might ſucceed;
In two days, by ſtrict computation,
All former knowledge he expell'd,
So much the preſent converſation
The convent dialect excell'd.
This firſt ſtep made, within a trice

The truly docil animal,
(Young minds too ſoon are ſkill'd in vice!)
In ribaldry was clerical,
And quickly learnt to curſe and ſwear,
As faſt as an old Dev'l would chatter,
Bound down by chains of myſtic pray'r,
Beneath a pot of holy water.
His practice contradicted plain
A maxim which old books maintain,
That none to heinous crimes can leap
At firſt, but progreſs ſtep by ſtep,
For he at once without degree
Was doctor in iniquity.
He learnt by heart the alphabet
Of watermen, the LOIRE along,
And when, in any ſtormy fit,
An oath eſcap'd a Sailer's tongue,
VER-VERT, emphatically plain,
Re-echo'd *damn you* back again:
On this applauded by the crew,
Proudly content with what had paſt,
Sollicitous he daily grew,
The ſhameful honor to purſue

Of

Of pleaſing their corrupted taſte,
And, ſoon degrading to their bent
His gen'rous organ of diſcourſe,
Became prophanely eloquent:
Ah! why ſhould bad examples force
A youthful heart, born free from evils,
From Heav'n's allegiance to the Devil's.
Ye nymphs of Nevers' convent chaſte
What did you in your cloyſter'd cells,
Where penſive Melancholy dwells,
Whilſt theſe unlucky moments paſs'd?
In that ſad interval, no doubt,
Nine days you ſpent in pray'rs devout,
Petitioning kind Heav'n to give
A happy journey home again
To the moſt thankleſs ſoul alive,
Who, quite regardleſs of your pain,
Abroad engag'd in pleaſures new,
Spent not a ſingle thought on you.
The yawning band of Tediousness
The convent round beſieg'd each gate,
And Spleen, in fanciful diſtreſs,
Sate ſullen at the gloomy grate,

Nay,

Nay, what the ſex ſhuns ev'ry where,
SILENCE herſelf came almoſt there.
Ah! ceaſe your vows, for VER-VERT's grown
Unworthy of your laviſh loves,
VER-VERT no longer will be known
My heart as ſpotleſs as the dove's,
By temper ſofter than the down,
By fervency of ſoul in pray'r;
Oh! muſt the Muſe the truth declare?
A very wretched profligate,
A ſcoffer of his ancient home,
Blaſphemer of your holy ſtate,
And looſe apoſtate he's become;
What you ſuch care and labor coſt
Among the winds and waves is loſt.
Then, fair ones, fondly boaſt no more
His ſcience and his docil ſoul,
Genius is vain and learning's ſtore
If virtue governs not the whole.
Forget him quite, the ſhameful wretch
His heart has tainted with pollution,
And giv'n up all thoſe pow'rs of ſpeech
And mighty parts to proſtitution.

But now to NANTS, the boat's laſt ſtation,
Our Hero and his friends draw nigh,
Where thro' impatient expectation
The holy ſiſters almoſt die:
For their deſires the riſing ſun
Begins his daily courſe too late;
Too ſlow his fiery courſers run
To gain at eve the weſtern gate.
The flatt'rer HOPE, in this ſuſpenſe,
For ever artful to deceive,
Promis'd a prodigy to give
Of genius, dignity, and ſenſe,
A Parrot highly born and bred,
Poſſeſs'd of noble ſentiments,
Perſuaſive tongue, diſcerning head,
In ſhort, with all accompliſhments;
But O! I mention it with pain,
Theſe expectations all were vain!
At length the veſſel reaches land,
Where an old ſolemn Siſter ſate,
Commiſſion'd by the ſacred band
Th' arrival of the bird to wait;
Who, on that errand daily ſent,
Ere ſince the firſt epiſtle went,

At firſt approach of riſing day
Her wand'ring eyes impatient caſt,
Which ſeem'd, along the wat'ry waſte,
To waft our Hero on his way.
The ſly bird had no ſooner ſeen
The Nun, near whom he diſembark'd,
But ſtrait he knew her by the mien
And eyes with holy prud'ry mark'd,
By the white gloves and languid tone,
The vail, and linſey-woolſey veſt,
And, what would have ſuffic'd alone,
The little croſs upon her breaſt:
He ſhudder'd at th' approaching evil
And ſoldier like, we may conclude,
Sincerely wiſh'd her at the Devil;
Preferring much the brotherhood
Of the Dragoons, who ſpoke out plain,
Whoſe dialect he underſtood,
Than to return to learn again
Pray'rs ſtuff'd with many a holy notion,
And ceremonials of devotion:
But the vex'd droll, by force, was fated
To be conducted where he hated.

The careful carrier held her prize
In ſpite of all his rueful cries,
Tho' much he bit her, by the way,
Upon her arms, her neck, and face,
And in his anger, as they ſay,
Would not have ſcrupled any place.
At laſt howe'er, with much ado,
She brought him ſafe to ſacred ground;
VER-VERT's announc'd. the rumor flew
Swift as the wind the convent round.
The bell proclaims the welcome morn,
Strait from the choir each Sifter ſprings,
And to the common parlor's borne
On Expectation's eager wings.
All crowd this wonder to behold
With longings truly female fir'd,
Nay e'er the feeble and the old
With youth's warm thoughts are reinſpir'd,
Whilſt each, regardleſs of her years,
For ſpeed forgets the load ſhe bears,
And mother AGNES, near fourſcore,
Now runs, who never ran before.

The End of the third CANTO.

CANTO IV.

AT length expos'd to public view
His figure was by all admir'd;
Charm'd with a ſight ſo fair and new
Their eager eyes were never tir'd:
Their taſte beyond diſpute was true,
For tho' the rogue had ſwerv'd from duty,
He had not loſt one jot of beauty,
And the camp mien and rakiſh ſtare
Improv'd it with an eaſy air.
Why, Heav'n, ſhould charms attractive glow,
Brilliant around a Son of Sin?
Rather deformity ſhould ſhew
The badneſs of the heart within.
To praiſe his looks and lovely feather
Our Siſters babbled ſo together,
Unheard, it would have been no wonder,
If Heav'n had roll'd its loudeſt thunder:
Mean while unmov'd th' apoſtate bird

Deign'd not to ſpeak one pious word,
But, like a luſty Carmelite,
Roll'd his laſcivious eyes about.
This gave offence, ſo lewd a ſight,
Was ſhocking to the band devout.
Next when the the mother Abbeſs came,
With an authoritative look,
The feather'd libertine to blame,
Contemptuouſly his tail he ſhook,
And, not maturely having weigh'd
The horror of the words he ſaid;
Replied, in military phraſe,
What damn'd fools Nuns are now-a-days!
Our hiſt'ry notes that on the way
Theſe words he'd heard the Sailers ſay.
At this, with looks demure, another
The holy ſiſterhood among,
(Willing to make him hold his tongue)
Cry'd, *fie for ſhame my deareſt brother!*
For thanks *this deareſt brother* ſwore,
And us'd, ſagaciouſly enough,
One Syllable that rimes to *more*,
'Gainſt which few female ears are proof.

"Jeſu!

" Jesu! good mother, she exclaim'd,
" This is some wicked witch, 'tis clear,
" And not the bird of Nevers fam'd,
" To friends of our religion dear!"
Here Sutler like he cry'd aloud
The Devil seize this noisy crowd!
By turns each Sister did essay
To curb the feather'd grenadier,
And each as fast was sent away
With something buzzing in her ear;
For, laughing at the younger tribe,
He mimick'd their loquacious rage,
And, still more freely to describe
The dull grimace of scolding age,
He ridicul'd the dying closes
Of precepts snuffled thro' their noses:
But, what was worse than all the rest,
By these dull sermons much oppress'd,
And with unvented choler swelling,
He thunder'd out each horrid word,
The very Tars in noise excelling,
Which on the river he had heard;
Cursing and swearing all along,

Invoking

Invoking ev'ry pow'r of hell,
Whilſt Bs redundant from his tongue,
And Fs emphatically fell.
The ſenſe of what they heard him ſpeak
The younger Siſters could not tell,
For they believ'd his language *greek*.
Next he came out with, *blood*, and *zounds*,
Damnation, -- *brimſtoue*, -- *fire*, -- and *thunder!*
The grate, at theſe terrific ſounds,
Trembling is almoſt ſplit aſunder;
And the good Nuns in ſpeechleſs fright,
Croſſing their throbbing boſoms, fly
Each to her cell remote from light
Thinking the day of judgment nigh;
Wide op'ning her ſepulchral jaws
One ancient Siſter whines, "what evil
" Have we deſign'd, good Heav'n, that draws
" Upon us this incarnate Devil?
" By what incentive is he mov'd
" So like the damn'd below to ſwear?
" Is this that VER-VERT ſo approv'd?
" Are theſe his faculties ſo rare?
" But let us without farther pain

" Send

"Send back the profligate again."
" Mother of God, another cries,
" What horrors are before our eyes!
" In NEVERS' conſecrated dome
" Is this the language Veſtals ſpeak?
" Is all their youth taught thus at home!
" Home with the hateſull heretick!
" For if he enters we ſhall dwell
" In league with all the fiends of hell."
In fine his freedom VER-VERT loſt,
And 'twas reſolv'd, without delay,
To ſend the wretch cag'd up away.
This end our pilgrim wiſh'd the moſt:
Howe'er, in form, he's cited firſt,
Arraign'd, deteſtable declar'd,
Convicted by the court, accurſt,
And from each charity debarr'd,
For having wickedly aſſail'd
The virtue of the Siſters vail'd.
All ſign the ſentence, yet bemoan
The object it's inflicted on;
For pity 'tis, ere full age blooms,
To find depravity ſo foul,

Or that beneath ſuch beauteous plumes
A debaucheé's corrupted ſoul,
The pagan manners of a Turk,
And tongue of infidel ſhould lurk.
In ſhort his old conductreſs bore
The baniſh'd culprit to the port,
But in returning, as before,
He never bit our Siſter for't,
For joyfully he left the ſhore,
And in a tilt boat home return'd,
Where Nevers' Nuns his abſence mourn'd.
Such was the Iliad of his woes!
But ah! what unexpected mourning,
What clamor and deſpair aroſe,
When, to his former friends returning,
He ſhock'd 'em with a repetition
Of his late verbal acquiſition.
What could th' afflicted Siſters do?
With eyes in tears and hearts in trouble,
Nine venerable Nuns, for woe
Each in a vail funereal double,
Into the ſeat of judgment go,
Who, in their wrinkled fronts, reſembled

Nine

Nine AGES in a court aſſembled.
There without hopes of happy ending,
Depriv'd of all to plead his cauſe
On whom there was the leaſt depending,
Poor VER-VERT ſate, unſkill'd in laws,
Chain'd to his cage, in open court,
And ſtript of glory and ſupport.
To condemnation they proceed
Two SYBILS ſentence him to bleed;
'Twas voted by two Siſters more;
Not ſo *religiouſly inhuman*,
To ſend him to that INDIAN ſhore,
Unknown to any chriſtian woman,
That conſcience might his boſom gore,
And yield him up a prey to death
Where firſt, with BRACHMEN, he drew breath:
But the five others all according
In leſſer puniſhments awarding,
For Pennance, two long months conclude
That he ſhould paſs in abſtinence,
Three more in diſmal ſolitude,
And four in ſpeechleſs penitence,
During which ſeaſon they preclude

Biſcuits and fruits, the toilette's treaſures,
Alcoves, and walks, thoſe convent pleaſures.
Nor was this all, for, to compleat
His miſerable ſituation,
They gave him, in his ſad retreat,
For Jailer, guard, and converſation,
A ſtale lay Sifter, or much rather
An old vail'd ape, all ſkin and bone,
Or, cover'd o'er with wrinkled leather.
A walking female ſkeleton;
An object proper, to fall'n glory,
To cry aloud, *memento mori.*
Spite of this dragon's watchful ſoul
The younger Nuns would often go,
With looks of pity to condole,
Which e'en in exil ſoften'd woe.
Nay ſome, from morning pray'rs returning,
With nuts and candied almonds came,
But to a wretch in priſon mourning
Weeds and ambroſia were the ſame.
Taught by misfortune's ſound tuition,
Cloath'd with diſgrace, and ſtung with pain,
Or ſick of that old ſcare-crow viſion,

The bird became in pure contrition
Acquainted with himself again:
Forgetting his belov'd dragoons,
And quite according with the nuns
In one continued unison
Of air, of manners, and of tone,
No sleek prebendal priest could be
More thoroughly devout than he.
When this conversion was related
The grey divan at once awarded
His banishment should be abated,
And farther vengeance quite discarded.
There the blest day of his recall
Is annually a festival,
Whose silken moments white and even
Spun by the hands of smiling Love,
Whilst all th' attendant Fates approve,
To soft delights are ever given.
How short's the date of human pleasure!
How false of happiness the measure!
The dormitory, strew'd with flowers,
Short pray'r, rejoicing, song, and feast,
Sweet tumult, freedom, thoughtless hours,

Their amiable zeal expreſs'd,
And not a ſingle ſign of ſorrow
The woes predicted of to-morrow;
But O! what favors miſapplied
Our holy ſiſterhood beſtow'd!
From abſtinence's ſhallow tide
Into a ſtream that overflow'd
With ſweets, ſo long debarr'd from taſteing,
Poor VER-VERT too abruptly haſteing,
(His ſkin with ſugar being wadded,
With *liquid fires* his entrails burn'd)
Beheld at once his roſes faded,
And to funereal cypreſs turn'd.
The Nuns endeavor'd, but in vain,
His fleeting ſpirit to detain,
But ſweet exceſs had haſten'd fate,
And, whilſt around the fair ones cry'd,
Of love a victim fortunate
In pleaſure's downy breaſt he died,
His dying words their boſoms fir'd
And will for ever be admir'd.
VENUS herſelf his eye-lids clos'd,
And in ELYSIUM plac'd his ſhade

Where

Where hero parrots safe repos'd
In almond groves that never fade,
Near him, whose fate and fluent tongue,
Corinna's lover wept and sung.

What tongue sufficienrly can tell
How much bemoan'd our hero fell!
The Nun, whose office 'twas, invited,
The bearers to th' illustrious dead,
And letters circular indited,
In which this mournful tale I red.
But to transmit his image down
To generations yet unknown,
A painter, who each beauty knew,
His portraiture from nature drew,
And many a hand, guided by Love
O'er the stretch'd sampler's canvas plain,
In broid'ry's various colors strove
To raise his form to life again;
Whilst Grief t' assist each artist came
And painted tears around the frame.
All rites funereal they bestow'd,
Which erst to birds of high renown
The band of Helicon allow'd,

When

When from the body life was flown.
Beneath a verdant myrtle's ſhade,
Which o'er the *mauſoleum* ſpread,
A ſmall ſarcophagus was laid
To keep the aſhes of the dead.
On porph'ry grav'd in characters
Of gold, with ſculptur'd garlands grac'd,
Theſe lines, exciting Pity's tears,
Our convent ARTEMISIAS plac'd.

YE NOVICE NUNS, WHO TO THIS GROVE REPAIR
TO CHAT BY STEALTH UNAW'D BY AGE'S FROWN,
YOUR TONGUES ONE MOMENT, IF YOU CAN, FORBEAR,
TILL THE SAD TALE OF OUR AFFLICTION'S KNOWN.
IF 'TIS TOO MUCH THAT ORGAN TO RESTRAIN,
USE IT TO SPEAK WHAT ANGUISH DEATH IMPARTS:
ONE LINE THIS CAUSE FOR SORROW WILL EXPLAIN;
HERE VER-VERT LIES, AND HERE LIE ALL OUR [HEARTS.

'Tis ſaid however (to purſue
My ſtory but a word or two)
The ſoul of VER-VERT is not pent

Within

Within th' aforesaid monument,
But, by permission of the Fates,
Some holy sister animates,
And will, in transmigration, run
From time to time, from Nun to Nun,
Transmitting to all ages hence
In them his deathless eloquence.

The end of the fourth and last CANTO.

MAR